

DRAFT

Town of Weare Finance Committee

Minutes of the Meeting of December 10, 2009

The Finance Committee met on Wednesday, December 10, 2009, at 6 p.m. in the Selectmen's room in the Town Office.

Present were Gregg Elwood, Neal Kurk, Brenda Lashway, Diane McDowell, Ike Shepard, and Mark Sullivan. Also attending were school board members and SAU 24 officials: Mark Zuckerman (JS Board), Don Gage (JS Board Chairman), Greg Jensen (JS), Dan Starr (SAU Business Administrator), Michael Turmelle (JS Principal), Jude Chauvette (CWES Principal), Mark Wills (WMS Principal), Marge Burke (Weare School Board), Doug White (SAU Superintendent), and Pam Shepard (SAU Assistant Superintendent).

The Vice Chairman opened the meeting by explaining the role of the Finance Committee and the standards by which it would recommend budgets and warrant articles at the 2010 school district and town meetings. The balance of the meeting consisted of a series of presentations, questions and answers.

1. **Budget for JS:** The proposed JS operating budget is \$140,000 below its proposed default budget but still would increase the tax rate by \$0.35, or 6.3%. Major required increases include \$330,000 in contracted salaries, \$22,000 in health benefits (up 21%) and \$62,000 for retirement benefits (up 10%). In addition, a labor contract is under negotiation and, if the separate warrant article were approved, would likely add to the total. A 3% wage increase for administrators is included.
2. **Budget for Weare:** The proposed Weare budget is \$172,000 above its proposed default budget and would increase the tax rate by \$.036, or 6.9%. Major required increases include \$424,000 in salaries and benefits and \$66,000 in utilities and maintenance. Reductions include \$46,000 in transportation, \$30,000 in out-of-district expenses, \$25,000 in supplies and \$12,000 in advertising. Two labor contracts are being negotiated (teachers and support staff). A 3% wage increase for administrators was included. A 3% raise for administrators and custodians is also included in the default budget.
2. **Staffing at JS:** The JS budget is based on a reduction of 3.6 full-time equivalent positions (FTEs), including 1.6 teachers, 1.0 paraprofessionals and 1.0 administrators. This reduces the total number of employees from 140 to 136.4, or 2.6%. This compares with a drop in student enrolment between 2005 and 2009 from 899 to 839, or 6.7%.
4. **Staffing at Weare:** The Weare budget is based on a reduction of 2.0 FTE in the teaching staff. This reduces the total number of employees from 182 to 180, or

1.1%. This compares with a drop in student enrolment between 2005 and 2009 from 1236 to 1085, or 12.2%.

5. **SAU budget:** The proposed budget is up 3.9%. There is no change in the number of employees, and no raises are proposed.
6. **Per pupil spending:** For 2007/08, per pupil spending at JS was \$10,904, just \$28 above the state average of \$10,905. For Weare, it was \$8,220, some \$3,286 below the state average of \$11,506.
7. **Possible budget changes:** The SAU indicated that, in order to meet the Finance Committee's objective of no tax rate increase, a total of \$670,000 would have to be cut from the three schools' budgets. As a practical matter, this reduction could only be achieved through staffing reductions. If the reductions were to be accomplished at the teaching staff level, four or five positions would have to be eliminated at each school. This would increase class size:

School	Now	After staff reductions	State maximum
JS			
WMS	23		30
CWES	18		18

This is troubling in general but especially problematic at CWES, which is currently a "school in need of improvement" under the federal No Child Left Behind Law. Teaching staff reductions might also result in an increase "out-of-district" placements for special education students at all three schools.

8. The next committee meeting will be held on Tuesday, January 6, 2010, at 7 p.m. In the town office building.

Respectfully submitted,

Neal M. Kurk
Secretary

NOTE: This DRAFT is being submitted to SAU 24 for a review of its factual material.